

Another subject I am particularly proud of is that we passed the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, a bill this Chamber passed with 99 votes. This law will help victims of modern-day slavery recover and rebuild their lives and will make sure these survivors—some of whom are children—are not treated like criminals but given the help they need to heal and to get on with their lives.

We have also passed critical bills to protect our country from cyber attacks—something we saw happen at the IRS, where 100,000 records of taxpayers was hacked in a cyber attack and stolen and compromised. We also saw millions of people's records compromised at the Office of Management and Budget.

Congress has passed legislation, which is now being reconciled with a different House bill to be able to get that to the President, to provide that security that we all need when we are online. And as I said, we passed the first budget that has been passed in 6 years. The point I am trying to convey is that not everything up here is fighting like cats and dogs. It is not the shirts versus the skins. It is not like the Democrats and Republicans can never find anything that we agree on. Sure, there is there is a lot that we disagree on, and that is fine. It is fine to have policy differences. This is the forum where those policy differences are debated and where, if possible, if common ground can be found, we can find that common ground.

I have told this story, and I am going to conclude here since I see our colleague from Georgia waiting to speak. When I came to the Senate, Ted Kennedy, from Massachusetts, the “liberal lion of the Senate,” who had been here for so long, was working with one of the most conservative Members of the Senate, the Senator from Wyoming, on the HELP Committee—the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. I asked Mr. ENZI, the Senator from Wyoming: How is it that you and Senator Kennedy, who are polar opposites, can find common ground and actually work productively on the HELP Committee? I have never forgotten it. Senator ENZI told me: It is simple; it is the 80-20 rule. We look for the 80 percent, if possible, that we can find common ground and agree on, and the 20 percent we can't agree on, we leave for another fight another day.

That always stuck with me as a very constructive way to work in a highly polarized environment where many of us share completely different views about public policy. But we owe it to our constituents, to this institution, and to the American people to try to find common ground where we can and offer them constructive solutions, as we have done time and again this Congress.

While there are some who want to distract or misconstrue or deny the fact, the fact is there has been bipartisan accomplishment this year. But it

takes leadership, and it appeared to take a new majority and a new majority leader after this last election to get the Senate back on track.

Even many of our Democratic friends who served in the majority previously couldn't even get votes on amendments, on legislation they wanted to offer, because the Senate was basically shut down. But now we are back to work, and the Senate is functioning the way it should.

I wanted to say a few words to note these accomplishments but also to say thank you to those who have worked together to make it possible, who put the American people ahead of party to deliver real results in the Senate this year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

JOINT SURVEILLANCE TARGET ATTACK RADAR SYSTEM

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I have spoken at length about how our debt crisis and our global crisis are interconnected. Before I speak today, though, I want to thank the Senator from Texas for his leadership this year, as we did get the Senate back to regular order. I know we have much to do, but I appreciate his leadership as whip and as a fellow colleague. Thank you.

Today I rise to speak about how this overlap between our debt crisis and our global security crisis impacts the future of a vital Air Force asset: the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System, or JSTARS, as they call it. I visited with Team JSTARS to hear about their critical role. We made a visit. We talked about how their role affects our national security and our national defense and countering the global security crisis we face. I have also seen in Iraq and Afghanistan firsthand how this platform is absolutely vital to protect our forces on the ground in harm's way.

The global security crisis facing our Nation continues to grow. First, we face our traditional rivals—China and Russia—as they become ever more aggressive. The persistent threat of nuclear proliferation is now exaggerated and increasing every day with Iran's efforts and, of course, we see what is going on in North Korea as well. Finally, we face threats from radical jihadist terror groups, not just in the Middle East but here at home, unfortunately—and not just from ISIS. AQAP, Boko Haram, and al-Shabaab, to mention a few, are all thinking about how to do harm here in our homeland.

As a result, we know that the need for American leadership in the world isn't going to go away any time soon. Team JSTARS plays a critical role in our response to these threats. JSTARS is an Air Force platform that provides critical intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, or ISR, and ground targeting capabilities in service to all branches of our military. Over the past

25 years, they have flown over 125,000 combat hours in 5 different combatant commands. As a matter of fact, they have flown every day since 9/11.

The “J” in JSTARS stands for “joint.” Team JSTARS is a blended unit. The Air Force, Army, and National Guardsmen who work on the team, eat, sleep, and deploy together. These men and women leave for days, weeks, and sometimes they deploy for months to protect our men in uniform around the world. Not only are they a joint mission with the Army, but JSTARS also does several mission sets. JSTARS does command and control as well as providing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. From stake-out to shoot-out, JSTARS is capable of supporting all missions in all phases, with full spectrum capability from low to high intensity conflict.

In the words of General Kelly, SOUTHCOM's commander, JSTARS is quite unique, “a true force-multiplier, working seamlessly with both the DOD and interagency assets, generating impressive results in our asset-austere environment.” What makes JSTARS unique from other intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms is that on each JSTARS plane, we have unique manpower at the tactical edge to talk to our servicemembers on the ground with 22 radios, 7 data links, 3 Internets, and a secure telephone system. These are things we cannot take for granted. Our men and women on the ground talk about this incessantly.

As I saw it in Iraq and Afghanistan, we could not fulfill our mission without this type of capability in the air, overseeing our men and women every day. As we see threats around us from an increasingly aggressive Russia and China, the threat of electronic warfare is also a growing concern. If satellite communication radios are targeted—if these systems are degraded by the enemy in any way—JSTARS can in turn provide the same critical capability in theater. This is a redundant capability we cannot do without. This platform has proven itself to be invaluable and indispensable to our Armed Forces—not just in the Air Force and Army but in every service—the Marines, the Navy, the Coast Guard, and even in some counter-drug missions.

In the Pacific, JSTARS has been a key part of the Asia rebalance, helping to maintain stability and assure allies by providing vital insight to maritime forces as they push back against an expansive China. In fact, as China continues to challenge freedom of navigation and asserts itself in the Asia-Pacific region, PACOM is asking for more and more JSTARS presence at a very time when their capability is declining.

Also in Asia, U.S. Forces Korea commander General Scaparrotti calls JSTARS “very important to us” as he deters an unpredictable North Korea. Here in this atmosphere, JSTARS has flown in support of homeland defense, doing drug interdiction missions.

General John Kelly, the SOUTHCOM commander, said: "JSTARS is especially important, providing a detailed maritime surveillance capability that is unsurpassed."

To give you a comparison, a single JSTARS sortie—a single plane—can cover the same search area as 10 maritime patrol aircraft sorties. But the future of this platform is in jeopardy. As threats against our Nation have evolved, JSTARS has too. But there are only 16 of these planes covering our needs worldwide over the last 25 years. We have relied on JSTARS for 25 years to protect our men and women whom we put in harm's way—to protect them while other people are trying to do them harm.

Unfortunately, in the last 25 years, these planes are beginning to wear out. They are reaching the end of their service life. These planes have been in service since the early 90s. But even then, these planes weren't new when the Air Force acquired them. Each plane on average had over 50,000 hours when we bought them. The average age of the fleet is 47 years.

If you look at just one example in the JSTARS fleet, there is one aircraft that had 16 different owners or lessors over that time before it became a JSTARS, including Pakistani International Airlines and Afghan Airlines. I think it is very ironic that today that very plane flies oversight missions over those two countries.

As these planes near the end of their service life, they are spending more and more time in depot maintenance. More maintains is more costly. Dramatically increased maintenance time is threatening aircraft availability and mission readiness. This in turn impacts the number of JSTARS that can be put into mission at any one time and be out in the combatant commands while doing their job, while day by day the demand from combatant commanders for JSTARS grows.

What is more concerning is that as JSTARS near the end of their service life, as you can see on this chart, there is a gap. If we do nothing, we will have a gap of 10 years. The best we could do starting today is to shorten that gap to 4 years. This is a gap we cannot allow to happen.

This chart shows the declining availability of the current fleet down to zero by 2023. It also shows that under the current plan—pending DOD approval and funding—the replacement fleet does not even come online until 2023, meaning we will have a 10-year gap. They don't get back to full strength until around 2027—again, the 10-year gap. Due to the increased maintenance requirements of this aging fleet, JSTARS is already at a point where we only have about half the fleet available to fly at any point in time. Even if we extend the service life of JSTARS and accelerate the replacement, we can only narrow the gap to 4 years. This is unacceptable.

I have talked about the planes. Let me talk about the men and women who

man those planes, who service those planes, who keep those planes in the air. These are talented professionals. I have met with them. They are dedicated professionals, protecting our soldiers on the ground. They are committed to this mission, but they have to have our help. The men and women on the ground in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world deserve our help. But when it happens to have a gap like this, our irresponsibility as a Congress and as military leadership shows up.

We cannot allow this to happen. Recapitalization for the JSTARS fleet needs to happen, and it needs to happen right now. As these aircraft age, depot maintenance is not only more costly but also keeps these aircraft, which are in high demand for every combatant commander, from fulfilling their mission fully and putting our soldiers on the ground in mortal danger. This is precisely where we see the debt crisis and global security crisis intersect.

In the last 6 years, I have spoken about this before, but we borrowed 40 percent of what we have spent as a Federal Government. This puts our ability to support a strong foreign policy backed up by a strong military in jeopardy. As Admiral Mullen, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, once said, the greatest threat to our national security is our own national debt.

The JSTARS Program is an example of how our debt crisis is impacting our ability to fulfill our mission requirements. JSTARS recapitalization, which would replace these planes over time, is the No. 4 priority within the Air Force. The other three priorities ahead of it are very valid, but very expensive platforms.

Just last month, the Air Force acquisition chief, Assistant Secretary LaPlante, said that the JSTARS recap might get scrapped thanks to sequester and tight budget constraints. Again, this is a result of our fiscal intransigence and poor planning by military leaders. This prohibits us from meeting the very basic needs of our men and women on the ground who depend on this critical platform to protect them and provide overarching eyes and ears in the battle space. This should not have happened. The intransigence of Congress over the last decade and the intransigence of our military leadership and procurement planning are all at fault. We can fix this.

This week I am joining Senator ISAKSON and at least 11 other Senators in writing to Secretary of Defense Carter about the importance of funding for the next fleet of JSTARS in next year's budget request.

I wish to thank the defense appropriators as well as the Armed Services Committee for their support for this critical platform and mission. I look forward to continuing to work with them to support JSTARS. Not only do we need to ensure the new JSTARS fleet is funded, but this needs to be done fast. As I said, if we do nothing

today, we have at best a 4-year gap, not to mention the problem with the planes. What do we do with these professional military men and women who are irreplaceable—pilots, navigators, engineers, technicians, mechanics, schedulers, and computer experts. This is a capability we cannot do without.

Not only do we need to ensure that the new JSTARS fleet is funded, but again this has to happen immediately if we are going to manage this gap. This gap in capability that we see on this chart will become a reality if the pace of recap doesn't change. We need a faster solution. This chart shows why this recap needs to be a rapid acquisition program and we need to get on that immediately.

We need to ensure that this critical platform stays in theater. Our combatative commanders demand it, our troops on the ground depend on it, and they certainly deserve it. We cannot allow Washington's dysfunction to put our men and women in combat theaters in further danger. This needs to get fixed, and it needs to get fixed right now.

I yield my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

U.S. COMPUTER EMERGENCY READINESS TEAM

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I mentioned to the Presiding Officer in our brief conversation before I came to the podium that one of the things I try to do every month or so is come to the floor, usually when things are slower and there is not a lot going on, to talk about some of the folks who work for us and serve our country in the Department of Homeland Security.

Earlier this week, as my colleagues may recall, an outfit called the Partnership for Public Service released an annual report in which they rank the best places in which to work in the Federal Government. The report is based on surveys that are conducted literally by hundreds of thousands of Federal employees. This year it showed an increase in overall employee morale for the first time, I think, in 4 or 5 years. That is good news.

Despite the progress that appears to have been made in a number of Federal agencies, not all but many components of the Department of Homeland Security continue to struggle to make their employees feel good about their work and what they do for the rest of us.

I know the Secretary of the Department, Jeh Johnson, and his team have taken a number of significant steps to make the Department a better place to